Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Message Text

PAGE 01 MONTRE 02115 010259Z

11
ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 OMB-01 DRC-01 /138 W
---------- 130457
R 312047Z OCT 73
FM AMCONSUL MONTREAL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4033
INFO AMEMBASSY OTTAWA
AMCONSUL QUEBEC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTREAL 2115

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT CA
SUBJ: ASSESSMENT OF QUEBEC ELECTIONS

REF: OTTAWA 2561

1. THIS IS MONTREAL'S ASSESSMENT OF THE OCTOBER 29 QUEBEC GENERAL ELECTIONS. AMCONSUL QUEBEC IS REPORTING ON THE ELECTION RESULTS.

2. THE CENTRAL THEME WHICH DEVELOPED DURING THE CAMPAIGN WAS THE FUTURE OF THE PROVINCE AND THE LIBERAL PARTY (PL) LANDSLIDE WAS A CLEAR VOTE FOR FEDERALISM AND AGAINST INDEPENDENCE FOR QUEBEC. THE VOTERS INDICATED THEY ARE UNWILLING TO EXCHANGE THE MATERIAL COMFORT AND THE FAVORABLE ECONOMIC CONDITIONS THEY NOW ENJOY FOR THE PROMISE OF ADVENTURE OFFERED BY THE PARTI QUEBECOIS (PQ). ALTHOUGH THE VOTERS SHOWED THEIR DISAPPROVAL OF THE ORIENTATION OF THE PQ, THAT PARTY EMERGED AS THE OFFICIAL OPPOSITION. THE OTHER TWO MAJOR PARTIES LOST OUT, PRESUMABLY BECAUSE VOTERS WANTED TO AVOID THE DANGER OF SPLITTING THEIR BALLOTS ON THE IMPORTANT SEPARATION ISSUE. FOR ONE OF THEM,THE UNION NATIONAL, WHICH WAS PUSHED FROM POWER BY THE PL IN APRIL, 1970, THE LOSS WAS DE-
CISIE ANT THE PARTY HAS FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES COLLAPSED. THE PARTI CREDITISTE, ON THE OTHER HAND, ALTHOUGH IT LOST 10 OF ITS 12 SEATS, MANAGED TO MAINTAIN MOST OF ITS PLPULAR SUPPORT
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MONTRE 02115 010259Z

AND WE FEEL CAN BE EXPECTED TO REAPPEAR EVENTUALLY AS A VIABLE FORCE, ALTHOUGH CERTAINLY UNDER DIFFERENT LEADERSHIP.

3. ALTHOUGH THE PQ WON ONLY A DISAPPOINTING FIVE TO SIX PERCENT

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

OF THE QUEBEC LEGISLATURE SEATS, THE ELECTION RESULTS DO NOT MEAN THE POLITICAL END OF THAT PARTY. IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO SEE CLEARLY THE POLITICAL FUTURE OF THE DYNAMIC PQ LEADER RENE LEVESQUE WHO WAS DEFEATED FOR THE SECOND TIME IN A BID FOR A NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SEAT, BUT HE IS PROBABTY THE ONLY MAN WHO CAN HOLD TOGETHER THE VARIOUS FACTIONS WITHIN THE PQ AND THE PARTY NEEDS HIM. LEVESQUE DISPLAYED TOP LEADERSHIP QUALITIES DURING THE CAMPAIGN. HE SENSED THE POLITICAL TRENDS IN THE PROVINCE AND DOWNPLAYED THE SEPARATION ISSUE TO A SIGNIFICANT DEGREE, THUS UNDOUBTEDLY GAINING FOR THE PQ A NUMBER OF VOTERS WHO ARE AT BEST LUKEWARM ON THE ISSUE OF INDEPENDENCE. AS FOR THE PQ ITSELF, SOME OF ITS BEST CANDIDATES WERE DEFEATED BUT IT INCREASED ITS POPULAR VOTE SOME SIX PERCENT ABOVE THE 24 PER-CENT IT POLLED IN 1970. HOWEVER THE MAKEUP OF THE PROVINCIAL POPULATION IN TERMS OF ANGLOPHONES, FRANCOPHONES AND NEO-CANADIANS IS CHANGING AND SINCE THE APPEAL OF THE PQ IS PRIMARILY TO THE FRANCOPHONE ELEMENT. A STUDY OF THE BREAKDOWN OF THE

ESTIMATED FRANCOPHONE VOTE IS MORE SIGNIFICANT AS A MEASURE OF PQ STRENGTH THAN IS THE PERCENTAGE OF OVERALL POPULAR VOTEMZ THE PQ WENT FROM 29 PERCENT OF THE FRANCOPHONE VOTE IN 1970 TO ABOUT 38 PERCENT IN 1973, BUT THE PL ALSO INCREASED ITS SHARE FROM 33 PERCENT TO SOME 46 PERCENT. THE PROPORTIONATE SHARES OF THESE TWO MAJOR OPPONENTS DID NOT CHANGE APPRECIABLY BETWEEN 1970 AND 1973, AND SUCH CHANGE AS DID TAKE PLACE WAS TO THE ADVANTAGE OF THE PL. IT THUS APPEARS THAT WHILE SEPARATISM INCREASED ITS STRENGTH, SO DID FEDERALISM.

4. THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE PL CREATES CHALLENGES AND DANGERS FRO THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN QUEBEC. THE PQ DEPUTIES IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WILL NOT BE SUFFICIENTLY NUMEROUS TO EFFECTIVELY PROVIDE THE NECESSARY OPPOSITCON. MUCH OF THE OPPOSITION ROLE WILL FALL TO THE MEDIA, TO INSTITUTIONS, AND TO INTERESTED CITIZEN GROUPS. LABOR UNIONS COULD PERFORM USEFULLY IN THIS RESPECT IF THE LABOR LEADERS CAN MOVE AWAY FROM THE RADICAL POSITIONS THEY HAVE ADOPTED DURING THE LAST TWO YEARS. THE GOVERNING PL WILL HAVE TO CONSIDER CAREFULLY ALL ASPECTS CONFIDENTIAL

OF QUEBEC SOCIETY AND AVOID THE ABUSE OF POWER WHICH MANY FEEL WILL BE UNAVOIDABLE. PREMIER B URASSA HAS MADE WIDE USE OF

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES DURING HIS FIRST MANDATE AND SEEMS IN-CLINED TO CONTINUE BUT AGAIN THERE WILL NOT BE ENOUGH OPPOSITION MEMBERS TO SERVE ON THESE COMMITTEES. THERE WILL BE PRESSURE FOR SOME KIND OF REFORM OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM TO PROVIDE FOR PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION BUT THIS WOULD NOT TAKE EFFECT DURING THIS GOVERNMENT'S TENURE. THERE IS HOPE THAT THE PL'S PROMISED MOVES TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION OF A LANGUAGE POLICY AND THE PRO-TECTION OF THE FRANCOPHONE CULTURE WILL APPEAL TO THE MORE MODERATE ELEMENTS OF THE PQ. AS FOR THE HARD-CORE RADICAL SEPARATISTS, THERE IS DANGER THAT MANY WILL FEEL FRUSTRATED

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

AND UNABLE TO MAKE THEMSELVES HEARD. HOWEVER THIS IS NOT 1970
AND WE DO NOT EXPECT THIS TO LEAD TO ANY SERIOUS UNDEMOCRATIC
ACTION.

5. DURING THE NEAR AND MEDIUM-TERM, IT WILL BEHOOVE THE PQ TO DO
ALL IT CAN TO IMPROVE ITF CREDIBILITY AND TO PREPARE ITSELF TO
TAKE ABVANTAGE OF THE MISTAKES OF THE PL INCUMBENTS. SEPARATISM
IS NOT ONLY THE MOVING FORCE OF THE PQ BUT IT IS ALSO ITS
BIGGEST PROBLEM. DURING THE CAMPAIGN, PQ LEADER LEVESQUE
SOFTENED THE IMAGA OF SEPARATISM AND PROMISED A REFERENDUM THAT
WOULD ONLY TAKE PLACE SOME TWO YEARS FOLLOWING A PQ VICTORY. IF
THE PQ LEADER, WHETHER LEVESQUE OR ANOTHER, CAN CONTINUE TO
TAKE THE SPOTLIGHT OFF SEPARATISM WITHOUT ALIENATING TOO MANY OF
THE PQ RADICALS, HE CAN HOPE TO MAKE THE PQ PARTY AN ACCEPTABLE
ALTERNATIVE WHEN VOTERS DECIDE IT IS TIME FOR A CHANGE. HOWEVER,
IT IS LIKELY SUCH A PQ PARTY WOULD BE QUITE DIFFERENT FROM THE
PARTY WHICH ENTERED THE 1973 CAMPAIGN.

6. ONE STAFF MEMBER DISAGREES WITH ONE OF THE ABOVE CONCLUSIONS.
INSTEAD OF COMPARING THE PERCENTAGE OF FRANCOPHONE VOTE FOR THE
PL AND PQ, HE BELIEVES THAT THE PERCENTAGE SHOULD BE BETWEEN
BASICALLY SEPARATIST VOTES (PQ) AND BASICALLY NON-SEPARATIST
VOTES (THE THRE OTHER PARTIES). VIEWED IN THIS LIGHT, THE PQ
INCREASED ITS PERCENTAGE OF THE FRANCOPHONE VOTD FROM 29 PERCENT
IN 1970 TO JEI PERCENT TODAY, AND THE NON-SEPARATIST PARTIES
DROPPED FROM 71 PERCENT TO 62 PERCENT. IF THIS TREND CONTINUES,
EVEN AT A SOMEWHAT SLOWED RATE, IT WILL NOT TAKE VERY MANY MORE
CONFIDENTIAL

YEARS BEFORE THE PQ GAINS MORE THAN HALF OF THE FRANCOPHONE
VOTE AND AT THAT POINT IF THEY DO NOT FORM A GOVERNMENT BECAUSE OF
ANGLOPHONE AND NEO-CANADIAN VOTES, THERE COULD BE SERIOUS TROUBLE.
ALSO, IF THE PQ REMAINS THE ONLY OR STRONGEST ALTERNATIVE TO THE
PL, IT MAY GATHER VOTES FROM THOSE WHO MAY NOT BE SEPARATISTS
BUT WISH TO VOTE OUT A GOVERNMENT WHICH HAS BEEN IN POWER
FOR MANY YEARS.

7. THERE IS MORE DISAGREEMENT ON THE QUESTION OF VIOLENCE.
TWO STAFF MEMBERS SUGEST THAT INCIDENTS ARE LIKELY OR EVEN
PROBABLE, PERHAPS BY A FEW MALCONTENTS WHO WANT TO EXPRESS
THEIR DISAFFECTION WITH THE NORMAL POLITICAL PROCESS.
LAGASSE

CONFIDENTIAL

<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 11 MAY 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ELECTIONS, PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 OCT 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: garlanwa
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973MONTRE02115
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: MONTREAL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19731065/abqcefzb.tel
Line Count: 155
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: OTTAWA 2561
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: garlanwa
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 SEP 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <06-Sep-2001 by rowellE0>; APPROVED <14-Nov-2001 by garlanwa>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ASSESSMENT OF QUEBEC ELECTIONS
TAGS: PINT, CA
To: STATE INFO OTTAWA
QUEBEC
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005